



*The Grannie Annie
Family Story Celebration*

#17

The Grannie Annie's 17th Collection

Historical Family Stories from
The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
Written by Young People

Saint Louis, Missouri

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration

Welcome to the 2021/2022 Grannie Annie celebration of family stories! Students in U.S. grades 4 through 8, and homeschooled or international students 9 through 14 years of age, are invited to interview their family storykeepers and write a story from their family's history. The Grannie Annie experience leads young people to strengthen family and community bonds, encounter history in a personal way, and polish their writing skills. Students are encouraged to share their work with their family, school, community, and The Grannie Annie.

The works of thirteen young authors, chosen to represent the submissions received this year, are included in this seventeenth annual collection of Grannie Annie family stories. This year's stories are published on The Grannie Annie's website and in this complimentary PDF, and will be shared on social media throughout the year.

The Grannie Annie mission — to inspire young people to discover, write, and share historical family stories — springs from a belief in the transformative power of “story.” The simple, genuine family stories in this collection can help us connect with people in today's world and with people from times past. In unexplainable ways, these stories foster feelings of unity with people whose lives may seem very different from our own. Quietly, surely, the world moves one step closer to peace.

Published by The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration, P.O. Box 11343, Saint Louis, Missouri 63105.

The Grannie Annie welcomes — and desires to receive and publish — family stories from students of every race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and creed.

Because the stories in The Grannie Annie's seventeenth collection were captured from the oral tradition, they represent a unique blend of history, legend, and opinion. Accuracy — historical or otherwise — is not guaranteed, and the views represented are not necessarily those of the authors, directors, or publishers.

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Your tax-deductible donation will enable more young people to take part in The Grannie Annie, and will make the remarkable Grannie Annie published stories more widely available. Please mail your donation to the address at the top of this page or visit the donation page of The Grannie Annie's website: TheGrannieAnnie.org/DonatetoTheGrannieAnnie.html

In memory of
Ann Guirrerri Cutler,
whose passion for saving family stories
inspired The Grannie Annie
1944-2007

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Invitation to Participate

Praise for The Grannie Annie

* The time setting of each story is noted in parentheses here and also on the story pages. A notation of “c.” (circa) indicates that the year is approximate.

Story Settings Map, International

Numbers on map are story numbers.



Story Settings Map, United States

Numbers on map are story numbers.



A Word from Grannie Annie

Some Native American nations so valued their histories that they designated a tribal storykeeper. My mother filled that role in our family for decades, and before that, our family storykeeper was Mom's mother, my grandmother Randazzo.

Gramma Randazzo lived with us when I was a child. She didn't speak English well; however, at an early age I learned to say "Tell me a story about the Old Country" or "Tell me again the story about the baker's daughter who had dough under her fingernails." Then she would begin, in her broken English that made the stories even more fascinating to me. She told me stories about the olive groves on the family estate in Italy, about Grampa Randazzo's brothers and all their escapades, and about the family's early years as immigrants in Brooklyn. Mom carried on the tradition with her own repertoire of stories — about teaching in a one-room school, about blizzards and floods on the farm, and about rolling up the rug and inviting the neighbors over to dance.

I was fascinated by their tales and still am. I have written down many of their stories, saved them in keepsake books so they won't be lost. They're a treasure to read now, just as I had hoped, but I find I saved more than the stories themselves. Listening had been a way to be close to Gramma Randazzo. When I read Gramma's stories now, I remember sitting near her, hearing the stories from Gramma herself. When I read Mom's stories now, I remember aunts and uncles and cousins gathering around the kitchen table to listen. By sharing their stories, Gramma and Mom created a sense of family, a sense of closeness and security, that will stay with me forever.

Ann Guirrerri Cutler, *The Original Grannie Annie*, April 2006

What Are Your Stories of the Pandemic and Our Changing World?

The evolving COVID-19 pandemic is probably the most far-reaching event on our planet since World War II. Its continued impact, including many unexpected related issues, would have been more than enough to hold our attention without the addition of so many other breaking news stories, both national and international.

Have you been recording your thoughts, feelings, and observations about this unique time in history? Preserving your experience of today's challenges and celebrations will be a priceless gift for future generations — and may someday inspire a Grannie Annie story!

Note to Parents and Educators

The thirteen stories in The Grannie Annie's seventeenth collection, represent the 128 submissions received this year from young authors in four U.S. states. The published stories took place in four countries on three continents (and in Oceania) over a span of more than 100 years. Some stories relate a family member's involvement in historic events. Others vividly depict memorable experiences from times past. The stories entertain, educate, and inspire us, reminding us of the resilience of the human spirit.

Our volunteer readers chose these stories with you and your family in mind, yet you may want to preview the stories before sharing them with young or sensitive readers.

We're so pleased that you've joined us! We encourage you to discover and preserve some stories from your *own* family's history. And we hope that you'll join us again next year for The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration.

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton, Directors of The Grannie Annie

Listening is an act of love.

—Dave Isay, StoryCorps

**The Grannie Annie's 17th Collection
of Historical Family Stories**

1. A Venomous Surprise

c. 1900; Iowa or Missouri, USA¹

One dreary summer day my great-great-grandpa Hollings went fishing in a lake on his farm. It was swelteringly hot, so he waded into the water to cool off and cast his line. He waited and waited, but no fish nibbled at his lure. He had no idea what lurked under the water.

No sunlight shown on the water, but if some had, he would have seen the shape swimming toward him like a long ribbon in a gust of wind.

He was about to give up for the day and leave, but just then he felt a tug on the line. Excitedly, he reeled it in, expecting to see a fish, but what he saw was something altogether different. It was a snake! He dropped the fishing pole in surprise, but this enabled the snake to swim toward him through the water.

A searing pain shot up through his leg, and he knew he had been bitten. He hobbled away, but when he got to the shore, his leg buckled and he had to crawl the length of two football fields to his house. When he got to his house, my great-great-grandma Hollings came outside, and she found him on the ground, clutching his leg and in bad shape.

He told her the story and showed her the two puncture wounds in his lower calf that were leaking a yellowish-green pus.

My great-great-grandma knew a lot about snakes. She recognized that there was venom in his leg, so she put her mouth to the bite and sucked the venom out of the wound.

My great-great-grandpa had to lie in bed for a couple of days, and he recovered. My great-great-grandma had rotten teeth, and the venom she'd had in her mouth spread up into her head, and she got very sick shortly after. Thankfully, she got better. After the incident, my great-great-grandpa looked in a snake book and identified the culprit as a water moccasin, which is a very dangerous and deadly water snake.

After this startling discovery, my great-great-grandparents made sure to warn their friends and family to be cautious around the lake. They wanted to make sure nobody else would be bitten by a venomous snake on their property.

Dylan Powers; Missouri, USA

1. The setting of each story is noted below its title. In cases where the exact date isn't known, "c." (circa) indicates that the year given is approximate.

2. The Brothers at the Dock

1941; Honolulu, Hawaii

This story was told to me by my father and grandfather, who taught me poker when I was five years old.

On December 7, 1941, in Honolulu, Hawaii, my great-grandpa Louis Frederick Poehler and his younger brother, Elmer Poehler, were on the USS *St. Louis* dock, and they had been playing poker all night.

They were in the United States Navy and worked as firemen, in charge of keeping extra water on the ship to put out fires.

They were winning their hands of poker, and they were up \$9. They sat out the next hand so they could get a round of drinks. After the next deal, Louis had a flush!¹ He bet all-in. Elmer also thought he would win, because he had three kings — and mostly because they were competitive brothers.

They heard a plane. They looked up. Maybe because they had been up all night, the brothers thought that it was one of their own planes. Then Louis and Elmer saw “the meatball.” “The meatball” was the sailors’ nickname for the red circle, which symbolized the sun, on the Japanese flag.

The Poehlers knew that they were in trouble. They started running for their lives to the armory that was three miles away. They would not look back. They kept ducking and running. Nothing would stop them. Sometimes the planes were coming from every direction. The Japanese dropped bombs like kids drop bread crumbs for ducks.

The Japanese had an alliance with Germany in World War II and performed a sneak attack on the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor. They sank 9 Navy vessels, damaged 14 others, and obliterated 188 U.S. military planes. More than 2,400 Americans died that morning; more than 1,000 were wounded.

Louis and Elmer kept running and ducking. They hid under tables and stools — anything they could find on the way to the armory. It was a terrifying one hour and fifteen minutes of sprinting for their lives. They stayed in the safety of the armory for about ten minutes, until the bombing stopped.

The Poehler brothers then ran back to the ship and helped put out the fires that were burning on their beloved USS *St. Louis*.

After the fires were extinguished and the smoke began to clear, Louis looked back at the table where they had been playing cards. He saw that his cards were gone, but Elmer’s were still standing. Louis’s flush would have beaten Elmer’s three kings, but Elmer won because Louis’s cards were no longer there. Louis lost \$9 to his brother. That was definitely the craziest game of poker!

What was crazier than the cards still standing was that the brothers were still standing unhurt. The Poehlers had just lived through a moment that changed the world forever. Because of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States immediately declared war on Japan. The war continued until 1945, when Japan surrendered after the U.S. had dropped two atomic bombs on Japanese cities.

Maybe if cards weren't important in my family, the Poehler brothers would have slept through the planes' attack, and I would not be here to tell this poker story.

Atticus Poehler; Missouri, USA

1. A flush is a hand of cards all in the same suit — hearts, for example.

3. Driving Lessons

late 1940s; between Norbeck and Wecota, Faulk County, South Dakota, USA

In the late 1940s my grandmother Judy was nine years old in a town called Norbeck, South Dakota. Her family owned a small-acreage farm and grew wheat. They also had an old International pickup truck. Every few weeks Judy's dad would load up that old pickup with wheat. Then he would drive about five miles to the town Wecota to load the grain into the elevator.¹ One day he was busy and asked my *grandmother* to drive the truck to the elevator! She was only nine!

It was common in the country for people to drive without licenses. As long as you could push the pedals and steer the wheel, you were good to go. So there was my nine-year-old grandmother standing in front of the big old pickup while her father told her the basics: to put her feet on both the brake and the clutch, and to keep driving down the road until she got to Wecota. But her father also had one rule, which he said was the most important thing of all: Don't pass *anybody*. Keep on the road to Wecota.

Judy sat down in the pickup and started to push her feet on the pedals just like her father had told her. Before she knew it, she was driving! It was all going well until about halfway to Wecota, when she came up behind a car that was about as old as the pyramids in Egypt and was moving about as fast as they do, too. In the car was an elderly couple that Judy knew — Mr. and Mrs. Penfield. They were driving much too slow for Judy's liking, so after following them for a little while, she decided just to pass them. She knew she shouldn't, and she should follow the rule, but how much harm could it do?

She made sure no one was coming before she changed lanes and sped up a little bit. Then she went to slide back into the correct lane, but she had barely made it past the car she was passing. The back of her pickup almost hit the front of the elderly couple's car. She heard a lot of screeching and honking. Judy looked over her shoulder and out the window, and all that she could see was Mr. and Mrs. Penfield bumping across the country field. She had forced them to drive into the ditch at the side of the road, and they had just kept on going!

Judy never stopped to check on the Penfields and was able to deliver the wheat. When she got home, she acted like everything had gone perfectly. She pretended she had obeyed her father's every rule. But evidently somebody had witnessed her driving, because her father questioned her.

That day my grandmother learned her lesson about passing people while driving a pickup truck. That was the first time her father ever let her drive that old pickup truck. It was also the last time.

August Eversman; Missouri, USA

1. An elevator is a tall structure, often cylindrical, for storing a large amount of grain.

4. Whipped

c. 1955; Montgomery, Alabama, USA

It was summer in the mid-1950s in Montgomery, Alabama, and my great-grandma Lucille Bender was thirty-six years old. She was driving on a dusty country road with her two daughters, Sharon and Beverly. While they were riding on the dirt road, they saw a commotion in the pasture of the farm just off the side of the road. The pasture fences looked as old as their house, which dated back to around the late 1800s. There was a tall man wearing denim overalls with faded spots at the knees. He wore a short-sleeved white-and-red-plaid shirt. There was also a beautiful white horse that had brown spots on it. The horse was lying on the grass in the pasture, making a whimpering sound. The man was hunched over the horse and whipping it with a leather whip. The horse looked fully grown, but it looked pained as it received repeated blows.

My great-grandma, who had a serious love for animals, was horrified by the scene. She pulled over, got out of her car, and angrily marched over to the man while her daughters stared out the windows in awe. Sharon and Beverly were surprised that their mom would ever consider confronting a man, but they knew her reason was important. Animal rights wasn't a big issue at the time, but they took after their mother and felt that the horse should be treated humanely. They cared for animals as they cared for each other.

Lucille started yelling at the man. She was rolling on about how rude it was to hurt any animal, and that the man should care for animals as he would care for himself. He had a bald head and an angry face. His tight grip on the whip and his angered face showed that he was considering whipping Lucille. She was a very observant person. But she didn't back down.

Lucille and the man argued for a good ten minutes before the man agreed to stop whipping the horse and Lucille agreed not to call the police. She stormed back into the car. Her daughters were sitting in silence as their mom angrily drove the rest of the way down the narrow country road, but their mom was smiling with a little bit of pride. The dust was rolling from the tires as they drove toward the sunset.

Auden McElwain; Missouri, USA

5. Rags to Riches

1958–1981; St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Pa was fifteen years old when his father died. His mother just wanted to get married, so she married a guy who could not stand kids.

One day Pa's stepdad told Pa's mother, "You gotta choose him or me, because I'm leaving if he stays."

Pa's mother chose his stepdad. Pa was overall a good kid, but his stepdad just didn't want a kid like Pa. Pa's older sister was already grown and married, and had her life together. His nine-year-old brother was too young to be on his own. But Pa's stepdad didn't want a teenager like Pa just taking up space in his house and wasting money. So Pa's mom changed the locks on the doors, took as much of Pa's clothes as she could carry, threw them outside, and that was it.

Pa walked up to his house, and to his horror his clothes were scattered across his front lawn. It was 5:30 p.m. when Pa took his clothes and walked four blocks to an uncle's house. Pa knocked on the door and said, "I just got thrown out. Can I stay here?"

His uncle replied, "No, because your mother owes me money for dry cleaning." So Pa walked for a long time, and he ended up sleeping in a car.

A week later Pa somehow got a phone call, and it was from the parents of one of his friends. They told him, "We heard about what happened to you. We have a grocery store, and we want you to meet us there."

The next day Pa went to meet them, and when he got there they handed him an apron. They told him, "We are going to give you a job, and you can earn money." Pa worked till 9:30 that night, and they told him, "We'll give you a ride." Pa told them he had nowhere to go, and they said, "Get in. We'll take care of you."

They took him to their house, took him inside, and said, "This is your home for as long as you need."

This was what got Pa on his way to college. He got a scholarship that got him into UMSL¹ and gave him free housing. One semester later he got another scholarship to Mizzou's School of Journalism. After that, he worked five jobs and got enough money to keep paying tuition for the rest of college.

After Pa graduated, he began buying people's rags and selling them to recycling companies. In 1981, he began his own paper-recycling business that thrived and made him millions.

Alyssa Dean; Missouri, USA

1. "UMSL" stands for "University of Missouri — St. Louis."

6. Just the Bear Facts

1960; Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, USA

My grandmother Maureen McGovern was one of four children. Every summer she and her family went on vacations, traveling from St. Louis to destinations all over the country. Their vacations were fun, mostly because they were able to spend so much time together. One of their most memorable vacations was a trip to Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 1960.

As they waited in the line of cars to get into the park, bears lumbered in the nearby woods. A medium-sized brown bear unexpectedly approached the car on Great-Grandma Alice's side, slamming both paws on her window. She screamed as she leaped in fear across the seat. The bear had caused no harm and had wandered away, and Great-Grandpa James reassured the family that bears are not threatening unless you feed them.

When the family got to their campsite, Great-Grandpa James hoisted the food up into the trees and stored some of it in the car as instructed. After each meal the tablecloth was cleaned, and all scraps of food were put away or thrown into the trash to make sure that bears weren't going to be attracted to the campsite.

A few days into the trip, just after lunch, Great-Grandma Alice asked Maureen to throw away the trash. Maureen walked across the gravel road to the trash dumpster with a bear-proof latch. Maureen placed the bag on the ground, bent over, and opened the lid with both hands. Then she picked the bag up and stood up straight. And there he was — a huge hungry brown bear, standing eye to eye with her, eighteen inches from her face. Maureen was sure the bear was going to eat her. She stood frozen, trying to figure out what to do. She couldn't yell for help because she was so scared.

Luckily a crowd of campers noticed the bear and fell silent. On Maureen's right side was her dad. He calmly said, "Take my hand." But Maureen couldn't quite reach his hand, nor could she move her feet. She was petrified.

Then on her left side was Great-Grandma Alice, who said, "Put the bag down, Maureen. The bear doesn't want you. It wants the trash." Maureen didn't question those words, because she had complete trust in her mom. Maureen cautiously leaned forward towards the bear and dropped the bag into the trash. The bear's tongue unraveled from his open mouth and dropped all the way down into the trash to eat. Maureen's dad picked her up, and the family slowly backed away towards their campsite. They watched the bear finish off the trash and wander off into the woods.

After the bear encounter Maureen felt safe and very happy to be with her family. She no longer had to take the trash to the dumpster!

This harrowing tale proves what Grandma told me: "Family is your greatest resource." Especially when there is a bear at your campsite.

Malachy Murphy; Missouri, USA

7. A Field Trip to Remember

c. 1968; Granite City, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri, USA

In the late 1960s Linda Louise Wizeman, my grandmother, was a third-grade teacher for forty students in Granite City, Illinois. Twenty-three-year-old Grandma took a teaching job at Wilson Elementary School to pay the bills while Grandpa was finishing college at Southern Illinois University after serving as a Marine. What started as a fun field trip turned into a harrowing experience that Grandma will never forget.

The day started off bright and sunny as the children filed into school. Grandma, who was a new teacher, had her hands full trying to control forty rambunctious students with no teacher's aide. One day she had sent a kid to sit in the hall and had forgotten about him until she left that day.

She had some very wild boys who were particularly hard to manage. Donny Wigglesworth was the most difficult of all. For example, he once took an Allen wrench to school to pass around the class so everyone could loosen the desktops. When the next class went in, the desktops dropped to the floor. Donny had also tried to climb out the window while Grandma was writing on the chalkboard. Grandma had a very hard time with Donny Wigglesworth! To make matters worse, all the kids thought he was very cool.

On this day everybody was especially excited for the field trip to the St. Louis Arch.¹ While all the kids were climbing onto the bus, Donny would try to trip them as they walked down the aisle. Grandma had had enough and put Donny in the seat next to her.

After arriving downtown, the driver parked the bus, and everyone started walking to the Arch. While looking up, Grandma noticed that the sky to the west had a very dark line that divided the blue clouds from the dark gray. A storm was brewing.

As the forty kids slowly started to ascend to the top of the Arch in the tram,² Grandma told the first ones to go up and to behave as they waited for her to get everyone else on the tram. She kept Donny at her side. Finally she arrived at the top. As she exited the tram, she looked out the window and saw that the storm had become considerably worse. The sky had turned green — with a twister in the distance.

The Arch staff immediately began evacuating everyone. One girl began to cry, and Grandma held her while trying to herd the kids back toward the tram and keep count of them. In all of the chaos, she lost sight of Donny, and another student told her he had already gone down with the first group. As the last group made it to the bottom, Grandma discovered that Donny was down there helping to keep the kids together until she made it down. She was very surprised, and thanked him for rising to the occasion.

The storm passed quickly, and everyone loaded the bus to head back to school. It was a day to remember.

Elizabeth Grady; Missouri, USA

1. The Gateway Arch, a stainless steel monument honoring westward expansion of the United States, opened to the public in 1967.
2. Visitors can ride an eight-car tram (five seated passengers per roundish car) to the observation area at a height of 630 feet.

8. All Eyes Are Watching

1986; Richardson, Texas, USA

Imagine watching a spaceship explode in the sky on live TV. That is what happened to my father on January 28, 1986. Most school children were watching this launch, because it was the first time a teacher would be going into space. Her name was Christa McAuliffe; she had given many interviews on TV, and America had gotten to know and even love her. Schools around the country had TVs wheeled into their classrooms to watch the space shuttle *Challenger*'s launch into space. This was history in the making!

On launch day my dad, then sixteen years old, was watching in the school library. The space shuttle engines built up power as the countdown reached "10" — everything began to shake and rumble. The sound was furious as the *Challenger* began to slowly rise and shoot off into the sky! Suddenly there was a huge puff of smoke, and the announcer fell silent. My dad didn't think anything was wrong at first, but then the camera focused on one of the booster rockets shooting away wildly like a dart. My dad was watching with the librarians, and everyone was staring at the screen with confusion and shock. My dad heard the announcer say something about an explosion. One librarian began to cry; everyone was still.

My dad began to go back to his classroom. He wondered if anyone had been hurt. To him it looked like the shuttle had still been flying. He anticipated that everything would be okay, but his hopes were futile. As he headed toward the classroom, more people began to come into the hallway, and many were crying. Teachers were comforting students and each other. The *Challenger* had exploded.

At my dad's school, classes couldn't resume as usual. Everyone was talking about what they had seen, so the school called an assembly. The principal talked to the kids about what had happened and said a prayer. This helped my dad, but there were still so many confusing feelings for him. Shuttles had launched many times before, and he had never considered launches to be dangerous. He couldn't understand how this had happened. It seemed impossible.

At home, things went on as usual for my father. He went to his room and did his homework while his mother cooked dinner for the family. During the meal, his father and mother talked about how horrible and sad the whole thing was. After eating, my dad turned on the TV; to his surprise he saw President Reagan beginning to talk about the *Challenger*. During the speech, my dad began to grasp what had happened that day. President Reagan was very clear: There had been an explosion, the astronauts had died, and now we had to honor their sacrifice and begin to recover from the shock — yet continue to strive and do daring and bold things. For the first time since the explosion, my dad felt that things were going to be okay.

Veronica DelGrosso; Missouri, USA

9. A Glass of Water

1987; Colombo, Sri Lanka

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to go through a civil war while trying to study at a university? What would you do? What *could* you do? My dad had to experience exactly that in 1987. There was a civil war between the government and a Communist¹ group that had the backing of some university student groups. This was when my dad entered the entangled situation as a university student leader who was vehemently opposed to the Communists.

Students began to rebel at universities all around the country, and some of the university faculty were kept hostage by Communist students. My dad heard that one of his teachers there was being kept hostage, so he decided to take a look at the matter. Dad went into a rundown, decrepit classroom where the Dean of Law, among others, was being held captive. The Dean's captors were tormenting and mocking her. To subtly show her that she still had allies and friends among the student population, my dad (named Shantha) asked whether she would like some water. She immediately seized upon the promise of a small respite that a simple glass of water would afford her and said that she surely would appreciate some water.

When in a few minutes Shantha returned with the cup of water and presented it to her, one of the Communists who knew him snarled, "Who gave you the authority to give water?"

To this, Shantha retorted, "I don't need anyone's authority to give water."

The Communist student was taken by surprise at Shantha's answer but did not dare to challenge him any further. However, the Communists guarding the entrance did not know Shantha and had no such reservations. They were in turmoil, simultaneously scared and furious at my father. Since my father did not sing their tune, they wrongly suspected that he was a spy. Then as he came outside of the makeshift prison cell, they jumped on him, presumably to beat him to death.

Fortunately a student who knew my dad immediately rushed across the hall to his defense and shouted, "Ah, this is our man, our chief organizer! Leave him alone!"

Suddenly the Communists in the doorway swiftly jumped to the conclusion that my father had popular support at the university. So with alacrity they backed away, sheepishly mumbling apologies and dusting Dad's clothes off.

If that student hadn't come to Dad's defense at that precise moment, I would not be writing this story today. After this incident one of the visiting American professors at my dad's university admonished Shantha, "You will not live to see your thirtieth birthday!" In his eyes it would be absolutely inevitable that Dad's

lack of discretion would lead him to an untimely end. I am glad that the professor was inaccurate in his assessment, as now my father will be nearly twice that age this year.

Aloker Pieris; Missouri, USA

1. In a Communist system, the government controls farms and businesses and often limits individual rights.

10. The Fish Feud

1990s; St. Louis, Missouri, USA; Micronesia¹

Stan, my grandpa, returned home from his workday at a company that manufactures dog and cat food. His job there was to work as their lawyer. At home he ate dinner, kissed Mary Ann, my grandma, and climbed into bed.

Suddenly he was woken by the phone ringing like a fire alarm. Stan looked at the clock and thought, “Who could be calling in the middle of the night?”

He picked up, and on the other end of the line he heard the hurried and panicked voice of the captain of one of the company’s tuna boats: “Stan! Help! Our boat is being boarded by Micronesians!”

Shocked by the news, Stan replied in a worried tone, “*What?* Do they have any weapons or guns on them?”

“Yes!” said the captain. “What should we do?”

“Don’t do anything. Surrender and don’t cause any trouble! I’ll contact my boss immediately,” Stan said assuringly, ending the call.

“Hello?” said Stan’s boss, the president of the company.

“Hello. It’s Stanley. One of our tuna boats just got hijacked off the coast of Micronesia.”

“*What?*” gasped his awestruck boss. “Is the crew being held for ransom?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“This is an enormous case of piracy. This needs to be taken to a judge immediately.”

That violation of territorial water rights was such a big deal that the company filed a lawsuit that was taken internationally. As Stan unraveled the events, he found out that one of the company’s tuna boats had been fishing for tuna they needed in order to manufacture their product. The people of Micronesia were upset, because they lived off that same supply of tuna. They fed themselves with the tuna, made their money with it, and all around couldn’t live without it. The Micronesians were worried for their livelihood, as they should have been. They thought that the company was robbing them of their lifeline.

During this period when the company’s boats were near Micronesia, the Micronesians had tried to scare them off. But the company had continued fishing in their waters. Finally one day the Micronesians had had enough. They went to their government and asked what they should do. The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) had said to wait till nightfall, sneak up on the company’s boat, and drive the company out of Micronesian waters.

That’s what happened the night Stan received the phone call. The Micronesians had even taken along guns and knives, thus making the event piracy and an armed intrusion. Thankfully, none of the crew got hurt, and all were released a few

weeks later. The boat and its catch remained with the Micronesians as part of a settlement reached between the company and the country.

That phone call from the captain is one that my grandpa will never forget.

Edward T. Rea; Missouri, USA

1. Micronesia includes around 600 small islands and more than one million square miles of the western Pacific Ocean, giving the country the fourteenth largest exclusive economic zone in the world.

11. The Light Shines On

c. 1993; Florissant, Missouri, USA

Everything happens for a reason, sometimes for the better or for the worse. My grandma learned this lesson when she was forty-two. She lived in a house with her two kids, her husband, and a dog named Mickey. She also had a neighbor named Mr. Shepley. He didn't have a lot of family visits. His wife had died a few years earlier, and his dog had recently died, too, but every time that Mr. Shepley saw Mickey, his face lit up with pure joy. He would reach over the fence at around noon every day to pet him. My grandma and her kids didn't always have time to play with Mickey, so she said to Mr. Shepley, "You can walk him if you would like." Mr. Shepley loved the idea, so every day at noon he would go over to take Mickey on a leisurely walk down the block and back.

Mr. Shepley did this for a year, until one month he started to come back earlier from their walks. Then one day he just stopped walking Mickey. My grandma was concerned, so she walked over to check on him. She knocked on the door, and Mr. Shepley's son opened it. He invited her in and explained that Mr. Shepley had fallen and was moving to a nursing home to get better care.

The next day my grandma, her kids, and Mickey went to visit Mr. Shepley. He was so happy to have visitors, but most of all to see Mickey. Soon after visiting Mr. Shepley, Mickey started not eating and was sleeping by the fence. My grandma tried to hand-feed him or drag him away from the fence, but he stayed stationary.

Soon after that, my grandma took Mickey to visit Mr. Shepley. She hated seeing their gloomy faces when she and Mickey left. After some research, she found out that pets were allowed at Mr. Shepley's nursing home. My grandma had a talk with her family, and they all decided that Mickey wasn't happy and he needed a new home. So the next day they visited Mr. Shepley and told him the news. He was shocked, grateful, and extremely happy. The relationship between Mr. Shepley and Mickey deepened from there. My grandma briefly visited every so often.

Mickey lived a long life of twelve years. Soon after Mickey died, Mr. Shepley died at the age of eighty-seven. My grandma still says, "There are people who bring light into your world, but even after they are gone the light still shines on, just in a different form."

Parker Holdmeier; Missouri, USA

12. The Unforgettable First Day of Work

2001; Washington, DC, USA

Where were you on September 11, 2001? If you were alive that day, you most likely remember exactly where you were and what you were doing. That day was a significant and tragic day in our country's history — many lives were lost. My mom can easily remember that day because she happened to be in our nation's capital, more specifically in the Capitol.

My mom, Catherine Lane, had graduated from North Carolina State University in the spring of 2001. She and some of her friends decided to move to Washington, DC, to get their first jobs. In high school my mom had done an internship with a Senator in the United States Senate. That gave my mom experience and contacts that allowed her to get hired by a North Carolina representative, Congressman Walter B. Jones, Jr. She still has her job-offer letter, telling her to report to the congressman's office located at 422 Cannon House Office Building on September 11, 2001, at 8:00 a.m.

She was so excited to start her new job as a staff assistant. That morning she arrived at 8:00 a.m., and had been there just long enough to meet her co-workers, greet Congressman Jones, and settle into her new desk.

All of a sudden all the televisions were tuned to breaking news, and everyone had their eyes glued to the television screens in shock. The first World Trade Center tower, located in New York City, had been hit by an airplane. Everyone thought it was an accident until another plane hit the second tower.

My mom said that at that very moment the SWAT team, dressed with all their helmets and guns, were running through the hallways, telling everyone to evacuate the building and get away from the Capitol. My mom was terrified, and everybody was freaking out, because they heard that another plane had been hijacked and was on track to crash into the Capitol or the White House.

My mom had no clue what to do, so she ran down the stairs and got outside. Minutes later a huge plane flew right over my mom and crashed right into the Pentagon.¹ She heard a huge explosion, and everyone ducked.

My mom was terrified and had no car and no way home. A co-worker she had met just minutes before offered to take my mom home. They eventually drove past the Pentagon on the road home, and she saw part of the building engulfed in smoke and flames.

The city was completely shut down, and traffic was stopped for miles. Cell phones were out of service, along with all other forms of communication.

Several hours later my mom finally got home and was able to call her mom. They both cried tears of relief that she was safe and had survived her first day on the job.

Harris Lane; North Carolina, USA

1. The Pentagon is a huge five-sided building located just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. It is the headquarters for the U.S. Department of Defense, which oversees all branches of the country's armed forces.

13. The “Broken” Leg

c. 2010; São Paulo, Brazil

It was a peaceful day when my grandpa, whom I call Vovô,¹ got an email inviting him to referee a soccer game for some big money. “Yeah, I am going,” he said to himself.

Game day finally arrived, and that is when Vovô figured out that the game was very “important,” because the winner would be able to sell illegal drugs in the favela.² So, technically speaking, this was all illegal.

You will never believe this story unless I tell you some things about Brazil, so I will give you a “tour” of Brazil. If you have heard a lot of good things about Brazil — well, they are probably true. Like many countries, Brazil also has a lot of crime, including illegal drugs. Also, guns are illegal there. The only people with guns are cops and criminals. Now that you know more about what Brazil is like, let us continue the story.

It was a beautiful day with the sun out, and the game was going fine for the entire first half. In the interlude between halves of the game, Vovô heard gunshots going into the air. The team with the guns said to Vovô, “If we do not win, you are dead.”

Then the other team, which also had guns, said the same thing.

“Well,” Vovô said to his friend who had gone with him, “we are dead anyways.”

The game was playing along, and then a drunk man sneaked up on Vovô and kicked him a couple of meters into the air.

Vovô saw the opportunity to escape the game, and he took it. He acted like he had broken his leg so that he and his friend could escape the game. While Vovô went in the ambulance, his friend traveled on Vovô’s motorcycle. His friend could drive a motorcycle, but he hadn’t driven one in two years. Thankfully he made it safely to the hospital.

When they got to the emergency room, they put Vovô in a wheelchair, but when he got the x-ray, Vovô confessed to his friend that he had faked the broken leg. “What?! But it looked so real!” his friend exclaimed.

“Yes, I faked it to get out of the game,” Vovô responded.

He got up from the wheelchair and walked normally toward the exit. After that, he went home and had a normal life again.

One week later, the person who had invited Vovô apologized for inviting him to the game. Vovô also got paid a fraction of the money he had been promised.

One month later one of the soccer players from the game saw Vovô outside a store, putting heavy groceries into his car, and the player asked, “Do you need help with your groceries?”

“Why would I need help?” Vovô responded.

“Because of your broken leg.”

“Huh?” Vovô had forgotten about the incident. “Oh, yeah, I am fine now,” he responded. He had to keep the lie going.

In the end, they both went home, and Vovô is still remembering the incident even to this day.

Daniel Furlan; Missouri, USA

1. Vovô (pronounced VOH voh) means “grandpa” in Portuguese.
2. A favela (fuh VEL uh) is a slum area, especially in Brazil.

Invitation to Participate

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration invites you to discover, write, and submit a story from your family's history. Your story can be humorous, tragic, inspirational — it can be about *anything* that happened in your family before you were born. The annual submission deadline is February 1. Complete details, including the guidelines and required submission form, are available on The Grannie Annie's website: TheGrannieAnnie.org/SubmitStories.html

Praise for The Grannie Annie

As a writing instructor, I encourage my students to enter various contests throughout the year. They have submitted stories to The Grannie Annie every year for many years. Thank you for the writing prompt and for reading their submissions. I have enjoyed the remarkable stories that many students have uncovered.

—Janine Edwards, Instructor; New Jersey, USA

The Grannie Annie is a writing opportunity with meaning and purpose. As students discover and share their family's stories, they come to realize the power of their pen to connect members of their family, stir the imagination, and touch hearts.

—Martha Stegmaier, Grannie Annie Board member and volunteer extraordinaire; Missouri, USA

Thank you for this great honor to be included in The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. I took my daughters to South Korea this past summer to meet extended relatives like my grandmother, who is from North Korea. It is very special that the story of her family can be memorialized in this way so that Esther and her sisters can appreciate their heritage.

—Sandra Sohn, Parent; Ohio, USA

My family has really loved the whole Grannie Annie process — the interview, the research, the editing, and of course the honor of having our family's story selected for publication. It's been such a pivotal writing experience for Aidan, who has just finished fifth grade.

—Mindy McCoy, Parent; Missouri, USA

Participating in The Grannie Annie offers my students a wonderful opportunity to learn about their families' history by interviewing a family member, and an authentic audience for their writing.

—Kathy Lewis, Teacher; Missouri, USA

Thanks for such a great opportunity to write powerful stories and to showcase our work!

—Carol Fitzsimmons, Teacher; Missouri, USA

The Grannie Annie has brought all 51 children in my language arts classes closer to their families — and to each other. When they discuss their stories, they notice similarities between their own stories and their classmates' stories. The Grannie Annie is a valuable program that has provided my students and me with a powerful learning opportunity.

—Elie Bashevkin, Teacher; New York, USA

Perhaps the greatest value of the Grannie Annie stories is something not written in the book. When a child interviews an older relative, the child gets to know a person he or she may have taken for granted. The relative gets to tell a story that might have been lost. A bond is created or strengthened. A story is recorded for posterity. New memories are woven, and — just maybe — a writer is born.

—Lulu Delacre, Author/illustrator of *Salsa Stories*

My daughter, Sophia Rose, contacted my mother in Germany after her language arts teacher suggested that she write a story about my mother in World War II. The two had a wonderful e-mail and phone correspondence over a couple of weeks. When I saw the final draft of my daughter's writing, I read a story my mother had never told me. My daughter created a new memory of my mother's life through her writing. What an amazing gift The Grannie Annie gave our family!

—Petra Swidler, Parent; Missouri, USA

The Grannie Annie gives students and their parents a chance to reflect on the varied experiences that weave together their family's identity. Many people have brokenness in their family history, and by identifying and writing about hard experiences, our children learn to see the strength and restoration of our loved ones. We're grateful to The Grannie Annie for providing an opportunity to publicly show honor and respect to our family members who have persevered.

—Christan Perona, Parent; Missouri, USA

Because of The Grannie Annie, I have been motivated to continue writing and am now working on my first novel!

—Aaron Schnoor, Author, *Grannie Annie, Vols. 5, 6, and 7*; Grannie Annie Selection Committee 2014 – 2017, and 2019; North Carolina, USA

When young people participate in The Grannie Annie and discover, and then reflect upon, their family's stories and the family stories of others, the experience can create in each of these young authors an enhanced sense of appreciation, understanding, and "connection." Thank you to The Grannie Annie for giving our communities young people who will see our diversity as an asset rather than a deficit, will recognize the sameness even in our differences, and will bring to our world a bit more compassion.

—Dr. Phil Hunsberger, Senior Partner, Educational Equity Consultants

This is my daughter's first time submitting her writing outside her school. It's very encouraging to her. She loves reading and writing. I believe this experience will have a great impact on her.

—Daniel Liu, Parent; New Jersey, USA

Year after year, my fifth-grade students are eager and excited to submit their work to The Grannie Annie. The experience of submitting a manuscript — with the hope of publishing — gives newfound meaning to their learning. The students stand taller when they become cognizant that the world is benefiting from their contribution.

—Rebecca Friedman, Teacher; Maryland, USA

The Grannie Annie challenged my students to go beyond their comfort zone, to write for a broader audience, and to see that learning goes beyond the four walls of a classroom.

—Ann-Marie Harris, Teacher; Maryland, USA

Thank you for starting such a heartwarming project where *all* the kids are winners, whether their stories are published or not.

—G-g Metzger, Teacher; Texas, USA

Publication of our daughter's story is special to us for so many reasons. . . . Both my mother and grandmother passed away a few years ago. Growing up, I heard this story countless times from my grandmother. It's wonderful seeing that story told through my daughter's words.

—Andrea Rominger, Parent; Alabama, USA

Orion's writing a family story was extremely important to his grandmother, who had a serious illness. When he called her to tell her that his story was going to be published, she was as happy as anyone had seen her in months. She read the story to anyone who would listen. I can't even begin to tell you the positive impact that this has had on our family.

—Andrew Jones, Parent; Pennsylvania, USA

The Grannie Annie provides the perfect opportunity for students to start asking questions about their families' past — not just the facts, but the stories. Then as they write, students begin to understand how *telling a story* differs from *writing a biography of facts*.

—Mark Futrell, Teacher; North Carolina, USA

I would like to thank you for giving Yifu such an encouragement, and working diligently to publish his first article! Our families in China are very happy to hear about this. It is an amazing experience to me that I witness that a part of my family heritage is being connected from my father to my son through the event you support! Thank you!

—Yuxing Feng, Parent; Missouri, USA

This book should be on the bookshelves in all elementary and junior high schools.

—The Reading Tub™, www.TheReadingTub.com

My students were so excited to write their family stories! Since the stories were written during our immigration unit, the students had even more reason to ask their families questions. The stories really enriched our classroom discussions and helped the students to connect to the concepts being taught.

—Amy Del Coro, Teacher; New Jersey, USA

Since my mother died recently, I have been cleaning out her house and going through her things and wondering, "Who made this quilt? Who's in this old photo?" Trying to remember the family stories that she told me has really driven home the need to preserve family history. It is so wonderful that The Grannie Annie encourages this continuity of memories.

—Beverly Miller, Teacher; Alabama, USA

The Grannie Annie is a good start for kids to get published. And I love the way The Grannie Annie helps people understand their family history. It also helps children get closer to their families.

—Andrew Malphurs, Author of the *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5*, story "Grandpa's Saddle"; Georgia, USA

Our son's *oma* is overwhelmed that her "story" is in print in *Grannie Annie*. . . . Every family member and family friend has a signed copy.

—Karie Millard, Parent; Indiana, USA

Since first becoming involved with The Grannie Annie, we look forward every year to the truly unique and heartwarming stories each student brings to the classroom.

—Brian Billings and Laura Amburgey, Teachers; Ohio, USA

Although most students in our Eastern European village live next door to family members from earlier generations, The Grannie Annie prompted them to talk with their grandparents in new ways — and to discover the customs and challenges of times past. In addition, stories from the Grannie Annie books have given my students a glimpse of the world outside their village, where differences may abound but the underlying human condition remains the same.

—Martin Ellinger-Locke, Peace Corps volunteer in Glodeni, Moldova

Stories connect people in families and communities, giving them a common language and understanding of the present as well as the past. Through The Grannie Annie, generations connect as students take time to listen to the stories of their older relatives — and learn from them. Then, as the students write and share their stories, the connections multiply.

—Amy Glaser Gage; Children’s author, writing teacher, and consultant to The Grannie Annie

When kids learn details about what life was like decades ago, the past comes alive for them. History becomes real — and they want to know more! The Grannie Annie provides an opportunity for kids to be inspired by their own family’s history.

—Florrie Binford Kichler, Patria Press

The Grannie Annie is all about connection. As it hearkens back to the original Grannie Annie, it continues her tradition of oral storytelling to link generations and cultures. Grannie Annie family stories written by young people illuminate a long span of history, often revealing family values honed from adversity or triumph and tempered by humor and love.

—Janet Grace Riehl, Author of *Sightlines: A Family Love Story in Poetry & Music*

The Grannie Annie is remarkable in its goals and in its approach. Recording and sharing the stories of preceding generations goes to the heart of education — it teaches us who we are as family members, citizens, and members of human civilization.

—Matthew Lary, Co-author of *Victory Through Valor: A Collection of World War II Memoirs*

My son “harvested” several stories from my father, including one that appeared in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 1*. My father has since passed away, and I am forever grateful that my son recorded these stories before it was too late. I doubt he would have done so if it had not been for The Grannie Annie.

—Karen Metcalf, Parent; Tennessee, USA

Taking time away from your technology-filled life to join in The Grannie Annie is like trading fast food for Sunday dinner at Grandma’s.

—Debra K. Shatoff, Ed.D., Family therapist and author of *In-Home Child Care: A Step-by-Step Guide to Quality, Affordable Care*

Teachers and parents, if you want to motivate students to love writing, ask them to write for The Grannie Annie.

—Bonnie M. Davis, Ph.D., Author of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You: Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies*